



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Administration for Children and Families
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

September 1, 1999

Dear Head Start and Child Care Colleagues:

The purpose of this letter is to share with you opportunities for collaboration. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has identified program collaboration as one of its priority work issues. ACF encourages you as program administrators and managers to explore and initiate additional partnerships to extend comprehensive services that meet the child care needs of low-income children and families.

The work of both the Head Start and Child Care Bureaus, to expand high quality comprehensive, full-day, full-year services for low income children and families, has supported this priority in many ways over the last several years. In addition, the work of Head Start grantees, child care providers, and State child care administrators has been invaluable at the community level in developing successful partnerships that support full-day, full-year child development opportunities for our nation's children and families.

Among the many actions to encourage Head Start and child care partnerships, the Head Start and Child Care Bureaus, under the direction of the Commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, formed a Federal workgroup comprised of central and regional Child Care and Head Start staff. Efforts of this workgroup include involvement in Regional and National conferences and program policy development.

The Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families recently released two documents that focus on eligibility and collaboration. These documents provide policy interpretations that encourage programs to define eligibility in ways that meet the needs of the families they serve.

A major milestone was reached last year when the Head Start and Child Care Bureaus in collaboration with the Office of Administration of ACF, jointly sponsored a Leadership Forum on Head Start-Child Care Funding Strategies to promote and facilitate collaboration between the two programs. The participants included Head Start Directors, State Child Care Administrators, national Head Start and child care organizations, ACF regional and central office staff (including fiscal and policy staff), training and technical assistance providers and Head Start-State Collaboration Office directors. The Forum focused on how to use a combination of Head Start and child care funds in local programs. Participants discussed the full range of practical issues and a variety of promising models related to the fiscal aspects of early childhood collaboration.

The Forum participants concluded that, in many communities, using a variety of funding sources is essential to support the costs of quality, comprehensive full-day, full-year services. A variety of fiscal management models that are feasible, successful and financially sound are available. The key to successful utilization of multiple program funds is to have in place sound methods for allocating, accounting and reporting on how funds are used to support program services.

The Forum included discussion of several successful local models of Head Start/Child Care blended funding. These local agencies had different approaches to delivering services, including Head Start agencies using a variety of funding sources, and other grantees that create partnerships with child care centers and family child care homes to serve Head Start-eligible children. They also use different approaches to allocating costs between funding sources. Some models assigned all costs for one-half of each day to Head Start, and one-half to child care sources. Other agencies assume that child care support pays for a basic level of care through the entire day and Head Start pays for enhanced comprehensive services, staff development and enhanced education supports, and other Head Start requirements such as home visits to families.

All programs reported receiving "clean" audits because they could clearly account for how funds were expended and they had established cost allocation plans that provided a rationale for how the costs were shared between different funding sources.

ACF further encourages consideration of the following approaches, which were shared during the Forum:

- Head Start and Early Head Start programs are encouraged to contract with child care centers or networks of family child care providers to serve Head Start-eligible children in the full-day, full-year settings of these centers and networks.
- Head Start and Early Head Start grantees are also encouraged to explore approaches to utilizing a range of funding sources to reach additional children with high quality, full-day, full-year services.
- States should consider reducing the frequency of their redetermination of eligibility for child care subsidies, in programs using blended funding, in order to provide more continuity of participants and stability of funding from child care sources.
- States should consider supporting a full-day rate of child care reimbursement to local organizations that provide high quality child care and comprehensive services with a variety of funding sources, or the option of entering into contracts with providers or agencies that can implement comprehensive services and full-day, full-year child care.

One of the most significant partnerships of the Head Start and Child Care Bureaus is the Quality in Linking Together (QUILT) Project. This technical assistance resource is available to support your efforts. Enclosed are the names of technical assistance providers that can assist you in extending quality, family-responsive child care in your communities. We encourage you to develop fiscally sound and programmatically strong services for children and families through the use of a variety of public and private funding sources.

Also enclosed are samples of program budgets that might be useful as programs look toward blending funds for full-day, full-year services. These budgets include The KCMC, Child Development Corporation, Kansas City, Missouri; the Snyder, Union, Mifflin Child Development, Inc., Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania; and the Puget Sound Educational Service District, Seattle, Washington.

Sincerely,

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for Head Start

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Attachment